

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY NEA:ARDAY:TH

APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY

NEA:ALATHERTON, JR.

S/S - RKKUCHEL

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 088187

NODIS

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, LE, IS

SUBJECT: LEBANON

1. I AM SOMEWHAT CONCERNED THAT THE SYRIANS MAY CONCLUDE FROM THE ABSENCE OF A SHARP ISRAELI RESPONSE TO RECENT SYRIAN TROOP MOVEMENTS THAT THEY HAVE MORE LATITUDE IN THIS RESPECT THAN WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY MAINTAINED WITH THEM. GIVEN THEIR APPARENT BELIEF THAT WE CAN CONTROL THE ISRAELI RESPONSE, THEY MAY ALSO HAVE CONCLUDED THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO QUOTE PERMIT UNQUOTE MORE OF A SYRIAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN LEBANON. WE WOULD LIKE TO GET ACROSS TO THE SYRIANS THAT, IN OUR VIEW, THEY HAVE GOTTEN JUST ABOUT TO THE BRINK WITH THEIR INTERVENTION DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS, BUT WE DO NOT WANT TO MAKE ANY FURTHER FORMAL REPRESENTATIONS ON THE SUBJECT AT THIS TIME.

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2. YOU SHOULD, THEREFORE, FIND AN OPPORTUNITY, AS SOON

AS POSSIBLE, TO RAISE THIS GENERAL QUESTION. IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO DO THIS WITH SHIHABI, BUT IF HE CONTINUES TO BE UNAVAILABLE YOU MIGHT DO IT INFORMALLY WITH DAOUDI, MAKING IT CLEAR IT IS NOT INTENDED AS A SPECIFIC MESSAGE FOR ASAD, BUT REPRESENTS WASHINGTON'S BEST JUDGMENT WHICH WE WANT TO SHARE AS PART OF OUR CONTINUING DIALOGUE ON LEBANON.

3. YOU SHOULD SAY THAT WE HAVE PRESSED HARD ON THE ISRAELIS DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS TO REFRAIN FROM REACTING TO THE INTRODUCTION OF SYRIAN TROOPS AND HEAVY EQUIPMENT ALONG THE DAMASCUS-BEIRUT ROAD. WE ARE AWARE, HOWEVER, THAT VOICES HAVE BEEN RAISED WITHIN ISRAEL CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE COUNTERACTION, AND ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAS INFORMED US TODAY THAT IT CONSIDERS THE SYRIAN ACTIONS HAD GONE RIGHT TO THE LINE PAST WHICH ISRAEL WOULD HAVE HAD TO TAKE MEASURES OF ITS OWN. SAY THAT WHILE WE HAVE MADE EVERY EFFORT TO RESTRAIN THE ISRAELIS, WE OWE IT TO THE SYRIANS TO TELL THEM TIS IN ALL FRANKNESS.

4. I WOULD ALSO LIKE YOU TO REFER AT THE SAME TIME, BUT IN THIS CASE AS A PERSONAL OBSERVATION OF YOUR OWN, TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SYRIANS MAY BE ANTICIPATING RESPONDING TO THE REQUEST OF A NEW LEBANESE PRESIDENT FOR SOME SORT OF SYRIAN MILITARY FORCE. AS YOU COMMENTED, THIS SEEMS TO LIE BETWEEN THE LINES OF ASAD'S RESPONSE ON THE SECURITY FORCE ISSUE. YOU SHOULD SAY, PICKING UP FROM THE POINTS IN THE FOREGOING PARAGRAPH, THAT IF THE SYRIANS DO IN FACT HAVE ANY SUCH THOUGHTS WE BELIEVE THE INTRODUCTION OF SYRIAN MILITARY FORCES EVEN IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD RISK THE CONSEQUENCES THAT WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY POINTED TO. AS THE SYRIANS KNOW, WE ARE FULLY ALIVE TO THE PROBLEM OF INTERNAL SECURITY IN LEBANON BUT ARE STILL OF THE BELIEF THAT AN ATTEMPT TO COPE WITH IT BY INTERVENTION OF SUBSTANTIAL SYRIAN FORCES WOULD ONLY CREATE FAR MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF A BROADER NATURE.

5. FYI: THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON, NOTING THE INSERTION OF SYRIAN MILITARY INTO LEBANON IN THE
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MASNA AREA, ASKED ME YESTERDAY IF THE U.S. HAD CHANGED ITS POLICY AND WAS NOW PREPARED TO ACQUIESCE IN SUCH INTERVENTION. I TOLD HIM THAT OUR POSITION ON THIS SUBJECT HAD NOT BEEN A MATTER OF U.S. POLICY FOR OR AGAINST INTERVENTION BUT HAD INVOLVED TRYING TO TELL THE SYRIANS BASICALLY WHAT WE THOUGHT THE ISRAELIS WOULD DO BY WAY OF RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION. OUR ASSESSMENT IN THIS RESPECT HAD NOT CHANGED, AND WE

CONTINUED TO BELIEVE THAT SYRIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION
WAS DANGEROUS. YOU SHOULD BE ALERT TO ANY INDICATION
THAT THE FRENCH WILL NOW GO BACK TO DAMASCUS AND REPORT
HAVING BEEN TOLD THAT THE U.S. CONTINUES TO OPPOSE
SYRIAN INTERVENTION AS A MATTER OF POLICY. SINCE THE
SYRIANS ALREADY SEEM TO LEAN TOWARD THIS INTERPRETATION
THEMSELVES, THEIR FEELING THAT IT WAS WE WHO WERE

OPPOSING THEIR ACTIVITY, AND NOT THE ISRAELIS, WOULD ONLY
BE CONFIRMED BY REMARKS OF THIS SORT FROM THE FRENCH. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INSTRUCTIONS, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, INTERVENTION, TROOP DEPLOYMENT, SECURITY, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL SITUATION, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, C AT-C
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: buchant0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE088187
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: ARDAY:TH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P840089-2111
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760467/aaaacera.tel
Line Count: 125
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchant0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <13 OCT 2004 by buchant0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANON
TAGS: PFOR, MPOL, LE, IS, SY, US, (MURPHY, RICHARD W)
To: DAMASCUS BEIRUT CAIRO TEL AVIV
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006